

THE TOUR OF THE BUNNIEWINKS.



R. and Mrs. Bunniewink determined to go for a tour in the holidays, so they got Wyld's Atlas, to look for a place to go to.

First they looked at a map of the world, but the names of the places were printed too small for Mr. Bunniewink to see to read them. So they turned to the map of Europe, but the print was too small there too: so they turned to the map of England, and the first name they read was Cornwall; and Mr. Bunniewink said, "Maria, we will go to Cornwall."

Mrs. Bunniewink said, "Very well, William; but I cannot and I will not go down a mine, William;" and Mr. Bunniewink said, "Maria, wait till the time comes."

Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink's two children returned from school this very evening, so they never unpacked their boxes, that they might be ready to start the next day. The boy's name was Montezuma, and the girl's Andromache (Mrs. Bunniewink chose these names because she liked uncommon and heroic names), but they were always called Zummy and Drummie! Zummy and Drummie got up at five the next morning in order to be in time, although their train would not start until 11.15. They spent most of the morning on the staircase, and were dreadfully in the way. Mr. Bunniewink was very busy packing, because he had to take a Guide-book to find his way about by, and pistols to protect himself and family, for he had heard Cornwall called West Barbary, and made up his mind that it was a place without roads, and infested with Moors. Mrs. Bunniewink lay down to rest before she got tired, fearing she might not have time afterwards. Presently the cab came, and Zummy immediately rode down the banisters to the hall, and scrambled on to the roof of the fly, just where he was not wanted, because that was the place for the boxes—and Cabby collared him, and put him down in the hall again. Presently Mr. Bunniewink came down, with his Guide-book in a parcel in one hand, and his pistols in a box in the other, and a large comforter round his neck, and large goloshes on his feet, and a macintosh on his arm,—well protected against the damps and dangers of the far west. But

Mrs. Bunniewink wore a pink bonnet and primrose gloves, "because you know, William, one never knows who one may not meet on the stations, William."

So Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink settled themselves in the cab, and the children and the Guide-book and the pistols, and the macintosh and all the rest of the et ceteras were settled in the back seat, and Zummy and Drummie rejoiced they were going for a *tour*, though they didn't exactly know what it was.

Zummy and Drummie behaved very well during the journey to Plymouth, but then they were so sleepy after their early rising; and between their naps they had to tell one another everything that had happened during the half.

After a good deal of bustle and confusion at the Plymouth station they were all packed into the 'bus, and the 'bus took them to the Royal Hotel, and Zummy and Drummie were much pleased at having rooms at the very end of the long passage there, so that they had to run the whole length every time they went in and out.

They had tea and went to bed, and the next morning they got up and had breakfast, and then they went out to see everything that was to be seen.

They saw the Citadel, where half the soldiers live, and Mount Wise, where the other half live. They saw the Devonport and Keyham Dockyards, where the ships that go to sea and those that stay at home are built. They saw Mount Edgcumbe and the Catwater, Bull Point and Mutton Cove; and they went on the Hoe and had a bird's-eye view of all they had, or had not seen before; and then they went home to the hotel so awfully tired that they thought their beds were the loveliest sight of all.

The next morning it rained so hard that they could not go on with their tour, as they had intended, but it cleared in the afternoon, so Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink determined to start; but they could not find Zummy and Drummie anywhere. They rang the bell and asked the waiter, but he did not know. They rang the bell for the chambermaid, but she did not know—the master of the house did not know—boots did not know.

Mr. Bunniewink loaded his pistols, ready to fire on the stealer and murderer of his children as soon as he should be found.

Everybody looked everywhere, excepting in everybody else's bed-

rooms, and if they had only looked there they would have seen that every bed looked as if it had been slept in.

Presently an old gentleman came in and went into his room in a great bustle, and when he got in, he found a boy and a girl sound asleep in his bed !

He was astonished, and rang for boots, to take away Zummy and Drummie, who when they were awake confessed that "they were tired of running races up and down the long passage, so for a change they had tried every bed in every room, and they found this so comfortable, they had fallen asleep in it, which they never meant to do."

The old admiral grunted when he heard this story, but he gave them each a new shilling, nevertheless. By this time it was so late Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink had to put off continuing the tour for that day.

The next morning they all started for Cornwall without any adventure whatever, but as they left Devonport Mrs. Bunniewink asked Mr. Bunniewink what was the next station.

"Saltash," said Mr. Bunniewink.

"Then, William, we are approaching the Albert Bridge, and I made up my mind the day I read an account of that bridge in the 'Record,' that I would *never* go over it, and I won't, indeed I won't, William."

And Mrs. Bunniewink put her head out of the carriage window (which by-the-bye is a very dangerous thing to do) and began to scream to the guard to stop the train and let her out; but the guard never heard her, and the train kept going on, and the wind was blowing freshly, and Mrs. Bunniewink's pink bonnet blew off: for a minute it flew about in air like a kite, and then dropped into the horrid black mud, just as they crossed the Skew Bridge.

Then Mrs. Bunniewink was quite overcome. She nearly fainted into Mr. Bunniewink's arms, and remained in that state until they drew up at Saltash, when she recovered instantly, and desired the guard to let her out, for "she would never go over that Albert Bridge;" and the guard said, "We are over it, ma'am." Poor Mrs. Bunniewink was angry to think that she had been taken over the bridge in a fainting state without a bonnet, and she ought to have been very angry with herself for fainting in that way, and missing the beautiful view up and down the wooded banks of the Tamar, with the quiet old men-of-war sleeping in the Hamoaze, and the quaint little town of Saltash piled up against the hill, on the Cornish side of the water.

She was so upset that she lay down in the carriage to rest, and slept

until they reached Bodmin Road Station. Mr. Bunniewink had great trouble in keeping Zummy and Drummie quiet in crossing the viaducts, they were so excited at flying over the tops of the trees in the woods, they very nearly thought they were birds. Mr. Bunniewink having discovered in his Guide-book that Bodmin was the "chief city" in Cornwall, determined to visit it. Mrs. Bunniewink got a bonnet then, in the place of the poor pink, but it was only black with amber roses, and she didn't care much about it.

Mr. Bunniewink took Zummy and Drummie to see the gaol, the assize courts, and the lunatic asylum, and gave them a little lecture on each place, and they disliked it all equally.

As they did not like Bodmin, they did not stay there, but went on to Truro that afternoon, and were astonished at the china clay works they passed through on the road.

Mr. Bunniewink got his Guide-book immediately, and began to read to Zummy and Drummie all about china clay and china stone; how it is dug out of the ground; and when it has been washed and dried it is sent to Worcester to make the best china of—but they did not hear a word their papa read, partly because the train made too much noise, and partly because they were not attending. Zummy was only wishing to jump flop into the fields of cream he saw, and which he felt sure must be good to eat, and Drummie became quite thirsty with longing to taste the rivers of milk they passed.

They entreated to be allowed to get out at the next station to see these white wonders nearer, but Mr. Bunniewink said, "No, the tickets were taken for Truro." Indeed he got into a rage at having to wait at Burngullow, the regular clay station, apparently for no reason whatever, except for the porters to have a little talk, and he scolded a porter a good deal about it, but he did not mind; only when Mr. Bunniewink had finished, the porter who had been scolded said to the porter who had not been scolded, "Up the country gent, that." The other porter was just going to laugh, but the train moved off at that very moment, and presently they reached Truro.

They were quite pleased with Truro. Mr. Bunniewink kept on saying, "Civilised" each time a little louder than the last, all the way from the station to the inn; and as it is some little way he was nearly shouting by the time he reached the Royal Hotel.

Mrs. Bunniewink was refreshed by the sight of the shops, and

Zummy and Drummie were enchanted with the clear little streams of water in the streets.

The first thing after breakfast the next morning they went out to see the town. Mr. and Mrs. Bunniewink started arm-in-arm, and Zummy and Drummie hand-in-hand.

They first went to see St. Mary's Church, and they were astonished at the beautiful great granite stones it is built of, which are carved all over; and they were also surprised to see what a poor plain little tower there is; but the person who showed them the church explained that to them. The church was finished and standing in its place, and the tower was finished too, of carved stones to match the church, but as the tower was built at the quarry, it had to be taken to Truro in a waggon; and as the tower was one hundred and twenty-five feet high it was tremendously heavy, and the waggon broke down at Probus; so the grand tower which had been made for the grand church at Truro had to be put up at Probus, and the plain tower which was intended for Probus was to be built at Truro; but they put St. Mary's beautiful bells into the plain tower.

When they had finished looking at St. Mary's Church, they went to see Lemon Street, and Mrs. Bunniewink would only say it was "not as fine as Regent Street," which was extremely silly of her, for it never pretended to be so fine, though it is a very particularly nice street indeed, and at the top is the Lander Pillar, erected in honour of the African travellers, Richard and James Lander, who were born in Truro. Zummy wanted dreadfully to try to climb to the top, but Mr. Bunniewink rebuked him severely for his "high flying ideas," and said, "Montezuma, do you see *me* trying to climb every high thing we meet? Why should *you*?"


After this walk Mrs. Bunniewink declared she was so tired she would "only just go into *seven* different shops, and then home and rest before starting for the Land's End or John o' Groat's house the next week." So she bought a new hat for herself at one shop, and a new hat for Drummie at another, and one for Zummy at a third. She bought an enormous and handsome serpentine vase at Heard's, a lot of photos at another shop, six bottles of medicine at the sixth shop, and last of all a lot of Truro macaroons, which are the very best macaroons in all the world.

The next day was Sunday, so of course they only remained quietly in Truro.

(To be continued.)

SLOWMAN THE SLEEPER.

CHAPTER I.

“ COUSIN HERBERT, please, you are to go and play croquet with the others,” said Lily Nevil to a young cousin who was staying at her father’s house near the sea-side.

“It is too much trouble, Lily,” was the reply.

Herbert was lying on a bench on the lawn. He had appeared to be asleep for the last half-hour.

“It is very naughty of you not to go and play: I shall call you ‘Slowman the Sleeper,’ if you do not get up and go,” said Lily. But after standing for a minute or two beside her cousin, wondering whether he would do her bidding or not, she seemed suddenly to have changed her mind on the subject. She nestled up to Herbert, and whispered—though there was no one within a hundred yards to overhear her—“If you won’t go and play, you will tell Lily a fairy tale, I know.”

“A fairy tale! that’s really a good joke,” said Herbert. “If you will go back to your sisters and say how very sorry I am to be so tired—I’ll go to sleep for a little while, and perhaps I may dream about fairies—that is, they will come to me in my sleep and tell me some of their adventures, I dare say.”

In a few minutes Lily came back, quite out of breath. She ran so fast, partly because she wanted to know what the fairies had told Cousin Herbert while she was away, partly because she was afraid of forgetting the message she was charged with for him.

“They say—Alice says—” panted she—“they say you are a Taugenichts. Do you know what that means, Cousin Herbert?—and Alice says those who are not good for work are good for—no! that’s not it——”

“Those who are not good for play are not good for work; is that right, Lily?”

“Yes, and,” added Lily, in a whisper, “I think they don’t like you because you lie about on benches and on the grass, and sit half asleep in easy chairs; and because you are always so tired and won’t play.”

"They should not choose such rough games, then—croquet is so fatiguing; it's quite too much for me."

Lily found a seat on the bench on which Herbert was lying. "Have the fairies said anything to you, Cousin Herbert?" said she in a low voice.

"You did not give me time to go to sleep, so they could not come to me in my dreams," replied Herbert, suddenly sitting upright, and appearing really as if he were only just awake.

The lawn, including the croquet ground of Cliff House, extended to the edge of the cliff, and a singular and very desolate scene spread itself out beneath it. It looked over the estuary of two rivers, between which and the sea ran a very dangerous bar, stretching nearly all the way from cape to cape, if such they could be called where one point was low and sandy and the other a rock scarcely rising twenty feet above the level of the highest tides. On this rock stood a lighthouse to warn mariners away from the dangerous bar in bad weather. When the tide was high, a channel was deep enough for vessels of moderate burthen; but not after half-tide, when the water was running out, or before half-tide, when it was flowing. A large ball was drawn up on the lighthouse tower when there was water enough to pass the bar; when it was too low, the ball was let down. And when the weather was very thick the machinery that raised the ball caused a bell to ring which could be heard far out at sea, but it only rang when the channel was deep enough to permit vessels to pass the bar.

"Do you know what takes care of the lighthouse ball, Lily?" said Herbert.

"Hans Cassel, the German clockmaker, to be sure," returned she.

"Simple Lily! On the contrary, it is a great white sea-gull which lives in a hole in the wall of the lighthouse, close beside the ball."

"Does he always stay there?" said Lily, opening her eyes very wide indeed.

"No," replied Herbert, "he goes out into the bay very often to get cod liver oil to keep the works moving smoothly and regularly, and that is why the fairies don't like the sea-gull, and are always at enmity with him."

"Cod liver oil? *that* is kept in great bottles! I see it at the chemist's! Why does he go out into the bay to get it?"

"The gull goes out to kill the cod-fish: then he gets the oil from

them, and anoints the wheels and pulleys and bars that move the ball. Now certain fairies are great friends of the cod-fish, for there are sea fairies, though they can live out of the water; so of course they are enemies of the sea-gull. Seeing the sea-gull take so great an interest in the ball, the fairies naturally thought that it was his most cherished toy and plaything. So they determined to watch what he did with his ball, that they might devise some means of spoiling his fun. When the tide was going out, therefore, a party of three fairies took the form of cockles, and opening the mouths of their shells they were able, from some sand-bank of the bar, to see the manœuvres of the sea-gull whose name was Silverwing.

"As Silverwing lived, as I have told you, in a hole in the wall of the lighthouse tower, he had, of course, access to all the machinery within, which he kept in most excellent order. So that now, as the tide was going out, he had only to creep out of his hole, and sit upon the ball, and down it went, slowly and majestically, as low as it would go. Then Silverwing laughed for joy, and spread out his gleaming pinions, and sailed away over the bay to make war upon the cod-fish for the sake of the cod-liver oil.

"The fairies watched day after day when the tide was going out, and every day they saw Silverwing playing thus with his ball, riding upon it as it sunk; and when it rose up again as the tide came in he had another ride on it before he fixed it in its place near the top of the tower.

"Now the sea fairies, who hated Silverwing, were great friends of some land fairies called Pixies; they lived in the wild mountainous region called Dartmoor. On the top of the highest of its hills, named Zestor, they have built a most beautiful palace; the roofs are of crystal, and the pillars are adorned with rubies and emeralds and sapphires and topazes; and diamonds are set in multitudes in the capitals of the pillars, among beams and flowers and scrolls of gold. When you see the rainbow arching over the tops of those hills you behold a faint reflection of the precious stones of the Pixies' palace, in its beautiful colours. But the palace itself is entirely hidden from mortal eyes. I know some very sharp ones that have searched for it keenly, but they have never seen it.

"Now I must tell you that the Pixies are rather a mischievous race of fairies—one bad habit they have is, however, I believe, shared by

all fairies; that is, the habit of stealing children. It so happened that the Pixies had taken a fancy to a sweet little girl whom some of them had seen when on a visit to their relations in Brittany, and they had stolen her; and three trusty Pixies had put her on board a ship which was bound for this very port of Avonmouth, where the pretty child was to be landed and conveyed by means best known to Pixies to this wonderful palace on the top of Zestor. Now this vessel came into the bay on the very day fixed upon by the malicious fairies to spoil Silverwing's fun. If their friends the Pixies had informed them that the ship was to be expected at that time they might *possibly* have behaved very differently. But though they were very intimate, the Pixies knew that these sea fairies were rather spiteful; so they kept the matter to themselves, which it is often prudent to do in regard to one's very intimate friends.

"The tide rose, and the ball was hung properly in its place. Silverwing looked out upon the stormy bay. 'That ship,' said he, 'won't be able to come in this tide; she can't make way against such a furious wind.'

"The tide fell; it fell soon because the wind and the stream drove it back. 'Aha!' said Silverwing; 'I said that ship would be too late! The sandbanks are getting uncovered—and what a sea: I must let down the ball!'

"So he came out of his hole, spread his wings, and seated himself on the ball. Lily! guess his horror—for he was really a well-intentioned fowl—when he found that the ball would not stir.

"'Oh, goodness me!' cried Silverwing, 'the tide is going out fast and the ship will think there is water enough on the bar for her to pass!'

"Poor Silverwing! Little did he imagine, when he was pushing with all his might at the ball, that the malicious fairies were under it, pushing it up as hard as they could, and really laughing at his distress, if you could have heard them through the roaring wind and raging sea. And he, poor bird! there were tears, real tears in his eyes as the ship drew nearer and nearer the breakers—with the little stolen child on board, you know. Nearer and nearer it came—But what are they all running after, from the croquet ground, I mean? and what a wind is getting up!"

"Alice's hat! Alice's hat!" cried Lily, running to join the chase.

"Come, Cousin Herbert, come—it will be over the cliff—oh what fun!"



"If people will play croquet on a cliff when the equinoctial gales are blowing, they must take the consequences;" said Herbert, slowly

getting up from his favourite seat, and strolling into the house, where he was staying on a visit.

CHAPTER II.

Alice's hat was blown over the cliff. The cliff was not very high nor very perpendicular, but the wind was rising, and no one thought it prudent to venture down the rough broken rocks in search of the hat. Herbert would not come to help—he was so lazy!

So Alice had to run back to the house with her hair picturesquely floating, like the grim Earl of Coventry's, 'a yard behind;' and she met Herbert at the hall-door, which he with difficulty held open, so violent had the gale now become.

"Oh, Herbert! I have lost my hat! why didn't you come and get it up for me? It is gone over the cliff!"

"I thought this pleasant breeze would blow the cobwebs out of your brain, Ally," returned Herbert.

Herbert was a grown-up cousin of the young Nevils—that is, he was about twenty: he was at Oxford, and would soon return there as the 'long' was now drawing to a close. All his cousins and the rest of the party collected at Cliff House would have liked him very much if he had not been so lazy—that was his great fault.

But, after all, I am not quite sure that he did not afford them more amusement in laughing at him for this fault than he would have done if he had been ever so active; and altogether he certainly was a great favourite at his uncle's, and spent a part of every vacation at Cliff House.

Luckily the hat was Alice's garden hat, and had been out in many storms: so in itself it was no great loss: and all would have gone on merry as a marriage bell if it had not happened that Herbert, instead of being himself merry and full of fun as usual, was extremely silent and thoughtful at dinner-time. So much so that the conversation at last went on without him, and he was quite forgotten till Lily and some others of the children came into the dining-room after dinner. Then Lily whispered to her mamma, "Mamma, where's cousin Herbert? I want him to finish the fairy tale."

Mrs. Nevil looked at Herbert's vacant place. "I did not see Herbert leave the room," said she.

"Nor I," said Mr. Nevil; "but it's as well not to inquire too closely. I don't doubt the younger branches will benefit by his absence when they see him again."

Mr. Nevil thought his nephew was preparing some surprise for the children; for in amusing them, at least, he often forgot to be lazy. So everybody adopted this idea, and even the children were contented, except Lily, whose head was running on Herbert's fairy tale.

It was odd that Herbert's head had also been running on the fairy tale—at least on the subject of it; and that was the reason he had left the dining-room silently at the same time that the servants quitted it.

He stood with his head uncovered and in his thin evening dress outside the hall-door and looked out. The wind had risen into a strong gale, and the swift clouds from the south-west were dark and broken. It was after dusk. The tide was high. Herbert thought it had turned—but it broke wildly on the bar, filling the air with its uproar. The larger of the two rivers looked dark and dangerous; the other, which joined it in the estuary, together with the little port of Avonmouth, were hidden from view by the cliff; indeed, the evening was so gloomy and dark that only the lights of the town could have shown where it stood if the cliff had not been there.

The lighthouse burners gleamed out cheerily above the general gloom.

The ball was visible from the spot where Herbert stood; it was in its proper place, that is, hoisted near the lantern; but as it was a dark evening the lighthouse keepers very wisely had set the bell ringing, to warn the vessels in the bay that they might now pass in safety through the channel into the port of Avonmouth.

Four lights were seen by Herbert on the dreary sea. One was stationary, apparently belonging to a vessel at anchor near the shore, and also near the bar—the others were far out—too far, Herbert thought, to get in this tide. He only hoped they would notice the silence of the bell when the tide should fall—as most likely they would not be able to see whether the ball were up or down.

The reason why so many precautions were taken about the bar was that the time of tide was more uncertain at Avonmouth than at most other places. The wind affected the tides in a remarkable degree, and also the varying amount of the water in the two rivers delayed or hastened them considerably.

Herbert was uneasy in his mind, he scarcely knew why; but some-

thing urged him to go to his own room, put on a rough fisherman's coat and trousers, and a sou'wester for a hat, and a pair of fisherman's boots—and to go out into the storm.

Avonmouth was a place much decayed from its earlier importance. It had been a very considerable port, but the water diminished yearly in depth from the accumulation of matter brought down by the two rivers; the bar increased in magnitude and danger, till at length even its deepest channels would only admit vessels of moderate burthen. So that the town wore a melancholy air of decay and poverty.

A fine old church and a few ancient houses, once inhabited by prosperous merchants, alone remained to tell the tale of its former consequence. Most of the inhabitants still maintained themselves by working for or supplying the vessels that frequented the port, or by fishing.

Herbert stood on the shore by the river, which was now very dangerous, for though the tide was with the stream the wind was against it, and raised short breaking waves of considerable size. The lights of the town were reflected in the harbour; the glare of the lighthouse reddened the waves that leaped and broke upon the bar.

The tide was going down. Herbert looked from the shore where he stood—a bleak sandy shore, with a boat or two drawn up high and dry—across the river. The lighthouse wore the appearance proper to it, with the ball in its place; the loud bell swung heavily out above the roar of the sea. Herbert lighted a match and looked at his watch. "What can those two fellows in the lighthouse be about?" said he to himself; "it is an hour and a half past high water—there cannot be depth enough in the channel to let any vessel, except the very smallest, pass."

Still the bell rang across the wide dark river. Herbert mounted a shelving bank that gave him a view over the bar. The three moving lights were much nearer. The bell was certainly heard on board the vessels, which were all plainly intending to cross the bar.

A sudden thought struck Herbert. He ran off as fast as he could to the town, and knocked at the door of a respectable-looking house in the high street. The inhabitants of the town kept early hours, and the summons was answered by a nightcapped head from an upper window.

"Come down instantly, Cassel," said Herbert.

"Down!" screamed the clockmaker, holding on his nightcap with both hands—"do you think I am so big a goose to go out because you do call? You are strange to me——"

"Come down, I tell you," cried Herbert; "there's something wrong at the lighthouse, with the machinery, I mean. Three craft will be wrecked on the bar if the bell goes on ringing in that way! Come down, I say!"

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed the little German, drawing in his head, nightcap and all, and shutting the window.

As Herbert waited, as he thought, an eternity for the appearance of the clockmaker, who was a wonderfully clever machinist—one of those geniuses whom a strange fatality sometimes buries in remote places—another man came hurriedly down the street. Seeing Herbert, whom he did not recognize in the gloom, standing at Cassel's door, he said, "Have you heard the bell? the tide is going down fast and the wind is right upon the bar; if those craft try to take it they'll be wrecked. The men at the lighthouse must be asleep or dead. I'm going to get a fly to take me there by Ladyweir bridge."

"It is useless," said Herbert; "you will be too late."

At that moment Cassel opened his door, wrapped up in such a manner as almost to look like that fatal ball still visible by the rays of the lantern near the top of the lighthouse tower.

"You must come with me; I am Mr. Nevil's nephew. Something is wrong with the bell and ball at the lighthouse."

"Where is your *wagen*?" said Hans Cassel.

"At the water side; we must cross the river."

"Not I," said Hans, doggedly.

"There will be plenty of corpse lights in the churchyard if the tide throws up the mariners that are running to destruction on the bar, misled by that dreadful bell that nobody can stop but yourself. I don't envy you, Hans, that's all."

Hans was very superstitious; a great genius in his way, but much of a simpleton. He trembled all over, and began to feel for his latch-key in his pocket. The wind had shut his door.

The second man who had addressed Herbert had suddenly disappeared.

Herbert placed himself resolutely in front of the clockmaker's door, so that he could not approach it.

"I saw a corpse light the other night," resumed he, "just over the skipper who was drowned on the bar before the ball and bell were placed on the lighthouse. His chronometer was wrong; I would not be in the chronometer-maker's shoes—oh not for anything—that light would—but what's that?"

Herbert turned round. Hans Cassel turned too; there, down the dark street, near where the church rose black and massive in the cloudy sky, was seen a crimson light making an irregular track, but certainly approaching the two.

"Mein Gott!" cried Hans, making a dash at his door; but Herbert stood before it firm as a rock.

"You *must* come with me. Are you a Christian man and refuse to come when you alone can save the lives of Christians?"

The light drew nearer and nearer. Herbert was delighted to see the little watchmaker dart off at the top of his speed down the dark street in the opposite direction. He rushed after him and seized his arm in order to give his flight a tendency to the desired point. Both stood before long in the black solitude on the brink of the roaring stream.

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed Hans. "You are never going to——"

"I am, though, and so are you," replied Herbert, pushing down the boat that lay near him with almost superhuman strength, but keeping an eye on the dark round figure of the clockmaker.

"I will not, I dare not!" cried Hans; "that *shreckliches* black water!" Herbert strongly contemplated lifting up that round bundle, the kernel of which was the mechanical genius Hans Cassel, and depositing it bodily in the boat, when at that moment the crimson light was visible round the sandy corner of the cliff. With a shrill cry of terror Hans tumbled into the boat, and in another instant the strong arms of Herbert, *alias* Slowman the Sleeper, were urging a pair of heavy oars against the wild waves of the river.

Terrified as was the clockmaker at his actual position, he was a little consoled in his present peril when he beheld the crimson light on the shore he had left, standing still, as he fancied, with a disappointed air.

"It cannot—no—it is impossible—it cannot follow me here!" muttered he.

Terrible was that struggle with the waves; the wind and the stream wrestled wildly together, but the skill and strength of Herbert kept the head of the boat in a slanting direction in regard to both; and with a thankful heart he at length leaped on shore, and dragged rather than led the watchmaker to the lighthouse.

The joy of the lighthouse keeper at seeing two human beings, one of whom he recognized as the machinist, may be better imagined than

described. "Come up, master," cried he, "the machinery is all wrong! Oh! that dreadful bell!"

A fearful disaster had happened. The comrade of the lighthouse keeper, in coming down the little stair from the lantern had slipped and broken his leg. His mate with the greatest difficulty had got him down the stair: he lay in great agony in one of the chambers. They had been quite unable to discover where the machinery was wrong, nor could the one man capable of moving go, miles round, for help. The boat belonging to the lighthouse was unfortunately in a little cove on the further side. Worst of all, three vessels were approaching the bar, deceived by the bell; one, the man feared was on the bar already.

"Bring all the rope you have," cried Herbert. He and the lighthouse keeper dragged heavy coils of rope down to the further beach.

There indeed was a fearful scene. The gale had increased to a violent storm, and a vessel appeared to be aground at the entrance of the channel, which was now becoming shallow from the fall of the tide. Two others seemed too near to escape the risks of the sand-banks.

Herbert and the lighthouse keeper with great difficulty launched the boat belonging to the establishment. One end of the rope was made fast to a post on the shore. The coils were already in the boat.

"If I don't come back," said Herbert, coolly, "you and the clock-maker had better carry your mate down to my boat and row him across the river."

"Not for my life!" said the man, "on such a night as this!"

Herbert pulled away towards the sloop, which was on the sandbank. It was not very far on, but must inevitably go to pieces when the tide should turn. It was, indeed, a pull for life or death. But the little boat and the fearless oarsman plunged deep and rose again and again, and passed in safety over the angry sea, till at length they reached the sloop. Not a moment was to be lost. She was in a very bad position, thumping heavily; she might break up any moment. The rope was put on board and made fast, and one of the sloop's crew of seven men trusted himself to it, and passing along it hand-over-hand, made his way safely to shore. Two others followed his example.

Herbert was in the boat: the terrible bell had ceased to pour its deceitful voice over the waves, crying out "Peace, where there was no peace." And as the boat rose to the top of the billow, he saw with a thankful heart the two other lights belonging to the vessels that had approached so perilously near the bar now moving away from

it. So his work there was done, and the remainder of the sloop's crew came on board his boat; and though their own boat had been stove, the oars were safe, so they helped Herbert to row back to the little beach.

"I stopped the bell, sir," said the crestfallen machinist. "I never did know such a thing as the machine going wrong."

"In five minutes the two other craft would have been hard and fast on the bar," said the lighthouseman, who was hospitably supplying the shipwrecked sailors with food.

"Who volunteers to cross the river with me to get help for this poor fellow?" said Herbert, pointing to the unfortunate man whose leg was broken.

Two of the rescued men readily consented to do so, though the lighthouse keeper endeavoured to dissuade all the party from attempting so dangerous an undertaking. Herbert, being refreshed with some food and an hour's rest, was soon once more on the dark river. But he had rightly divined that the tide being now low, the wind had less power over the stream, and thus the second passage was attended with less risk than the first.

Several lights were moving on the beach. Herbert saw that he was expected back with the little machinist, who, however, preferred awaiting on the other side of the stream the subsidence of the storm. The first person he recognized was the mayor of Avonmouth; he was the person who had spoken to him when he was standing at Cassel's door.

"That unlucky bell!" said he. "So the sloop's gone to pieces—the crew of course lost, poor fellows!"

Herbert had not much time for explanation. He took the mayor with him to the house of the Avonmouth doctor, who was soon ready to go to the assistance of the poor lighthouse keeper. His assistant followed him with the necessary appliances. Like two brave men as they were, they chose to cross the still dangerous river, rather than consume the precious time in the long and heavy ride across the distant bridge and along the shingly shore at the point of which the lighthouse stood. Two coastguardsmen undertook to row them across the stream. There was no time to lose, for when the tide should turn no mortal would be able to attempt the passage and live.

As the mayor walked part of the way to Cliff House with Herbert, he told him that he had adopted the idea of frightening the little

clockmaker into doing his duty by the fear of the corpse-lights, and had run to his own home for a lantern, which contained the light that had actually driven Hans Cassel over the river.

CHAPTER III.

It blew very hard the next morning. All the party at Cliff House were assembled at breakfast except Herbert.

"Slowman the Sleeper!" exclaimed Alice, when some remark was made upon his absence. "I wonder when I shall forgive him for not going down the cliff to rescue my poor hat?"

"Who *did* rescue it, if he did not?" asked one of her brothers. "It's in the hall, hanging on its usual peg."

"Dear me, how strange!"

"Herbert is a good fellow," said Mr. Nevil. "He has but one fault, and that is his incurable laziness."

"Affectation, I should rather say," said Herbert's aunt.

"I hope he will soon come down," said little Lily; "he must and shall finish my fairy tale. Oh, Herbert!" continued she as he entered the room—"but, dear me, you look quite odd!"

"I am only tired, Lily."

"Oh, you are always tired, naughty cousin Herbert! Then you won't be able to tell me the rest of the fairy tale?"

"Oh yes, I shall—or I will draw you a picture of its conclusion, which will do as well."

"Herbert," said Alice, "some more gallant knight than yourself has had the courage to go down the cliff for my hat, which you wouldn't do. It hangs in the hall as a reproach to you."

"I am so glad you have it again, Alice," returned Herbert, "it is such a becoming hat."

After breakfast Lily drew Herbert aside, and once more begged him to finish the fairy tale. "I want to know," said she, "which got the victory, the bad fairies or Silverwing?"

"The bad fairies were very powerful," said Herbert, taking Lily on his knee, "and Silverwing, kind Silverwing, sitting there upon the ball, trying to make himself heavier and heavier, felt his heart very sad indeed, for he could not press down the ball, and there was the vessel with the child the Pixies had stolen going on the bar as fast as she could, in the full persuasion that there was water enough to permit her to pass it.

"Now it so happened that Silverwing's brother saw all that happened; and knowing that the Pixies of Dartmoor were more powerful than the wicked sea fairies, flew straight across the country, to their beautiful palace at the top of Zestor. Silverwing's brother was quite dazzled with the brilliancy of the crystal roofs and the diamonds and other precious stones that adorned this splendid building, and with the lovely tints reflected from it on a rainbow which just then arched over it. But, being a fowl of sense, he pulled the door bell with his beak, and was admitted to the presence of the fairy king and queen and all their court, to whom he told his piteous tale. You may imagine the anger of these potentates at the malice of the sea fairies, directed so cruelly against the lovely child whom they themselves had stolen; and they sent Silverwing's brother back with the assurance that they would see to the matter, but that neither he nor Silverwing must be alarmed at what they said or at anything that happened. Strange to say, when Silverwing and Silverwing's brother were able to compare notes, they found that just at the moment when Silverwing's brother had left the Pixies' palace, Silverwing had begun to feel himself growing heavier and heavier. A slight impression was made upon the ball—it began to sink. Silverwing's heart became lighter as his body gained more weight. He looked out to sea, and thought he saw the doomed vessel tacking about so as to avoid the bar. Evidently those on board saw the ball going down!

"Now, Lily, bring me a pencil and a piece of paper, and I will draw you a picture of Silverwing pressing down the ball."

Lily, in a fever of delight, stood beside her cousin to see the wonderful sketch that was growing under his hand.

"There, that's the lighthouse tower! oh, it's so like! and there are three naughty fairies trying to push up the ball! What ugly little creatures they are! and there are Silverwing's wings—and—and a face between them: I declare—oh, Herbert, I declare its exactly like Hans Cassel the watchmaker!"

Lily's raptures were interrupted by the arrival of a visitor. It was the Avonmouth doctor. After speaking to Mr. and Mrs. Nevil he came up to Herbert and shook him most warmly by the hand. "I'm glad to see you up and busy, Herbert," said he.

"Breakfast was half over when he came down," said Herbert's uncle, smiling.

"No wonder," returned Mr. Stephens. "I have brought you a message of gratitude from the people at the lighthouse," continued he, addressing Herbert; "and as to the sailors and fishermen at the port, I believe you will have to be carried in a triumphal procession round the old town if you venture there. The two other vessels that were all but on the bar are safe in the harbour. The pilots ventured out as soon as they had worked themselves clear of the sandbanks when they found the bell stopped. But the greatest escape of all was that of the brig that was at anchor. Seeing the night look so bad she was just about to heave anchor and make for the channels, in order to come into port, when the bell left off ringing. She luckily held to her anchors, and came in safely at high water this morning."

Mr. and Mrs. Nevil looked very much surprised at this address, as did the rest of the party, composed of Herbert's cousins and some other visitors staying at the house.

But Herbert rose and walked quietly out of the room, for he knew what story the doctor was about to relate, and he did not wish to hear it. As he passed his cousin Alice he said, "Alice, I hope you will present the ribbon of your hat to the gallant knight who found it at the foot of the cliff, and brought it home for you. He would not risk his life for it, for he is in quest of the 'Holy Grail.'"

The profoundest silence reigned in the breakfast-room at Cliff House while the doctor related the events of the night, gathered from the worthy mayor, the clockmaker, the lighthousemen, and the sailors, and wound up by his own personal experience.

Herbert's uncle listened with natural pride to the tale of the good doctor. A few tears stole down the cheeks of his aunt, and perhaps those of Alice as well. Lily stood beside Mr. Stephens with open eyes and mouth, as if she could have listened with them as well as with her ears. Her plump little hands held Herbert's sketch spread wide out.

Certainly none of the party ever called Herbert "Slowman the Sleeper" again, though he might deserve to be laughed at for his affectation. And the two last things we have heard of that lazy individual are, that though he still sometimes professes to be very much tired and extremely sleepy, when all the world knows that he is wide awake, yet he has helped to win the University boat-race, and is suspected of being likely to stand very high in the final class list.

L. S.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS.

A FANTASIA.



T was Christmas Eve in an old-fashioned country house, where Christmas was being kept with old-fashioned form and custom. It was getting late. The candles swaggered in their sockets, and the yule log glowed steadily like a red-hot coal.

"The fire has reached his heart," said the tutor; "he is warm all through. How red he is! He shines with heat and hospitality like some warm-hearted old gentleman when a convivial evening is pretty far advanced. To-morrow he will be as cold and grey as the morning after a festival, when the glasses are being washed up, and the host is calculating his expenses. Yes! you know it is so;" and the tutor nodded to the yule log as he spoke; and the log flared and crackled in return, till the tutor's face shone like his own. He had no other means of reply.

The tutor was grotesque-looking at any time. He was lank and meagre, with a long body and limbs, and high shoulders. His face was smooth-shaven, and his skin like old parchment stretched over high cheek-bones and lantern-jaws; but in their hollow sockets his eyes gleamed with the changeful lustre of two precious gems. In the ruddy firelight they were like rubies, and when he drew back into the shade they glared green like the eyes of a cat. It must not be inferred from the tutor's presence this evening that there were no Christmas holidays in this house. They had begun some days before; and if the tutor had had a home to go to, it is to be presumed that he would have gone.

As the candles got lower, and the log flared less often, weird lights and shades, such as haunt the twilight, crept about the room. The tutor's shadow, longer, lankier, and more grotesque than himself, mopped and mowed upon the wall beside him. The snapdragon burnt blue, and as the raisin-hunters stirred the flaming spirit, a ghastly light made the tutor look so hideous that the widow's little boy was on the eve of howling, and spilled the raisins he had just secured. (He did not like putting his fingers into the flames, but he hovered near the

more adventurous schoolboys, and collected the raisins that were scattered on the table by the hasty *grabs* of braver hands.)

The widow was a relative of the house. She had married a Mr. Jones, and having been during his life his devoted slave, had on his death transferred her allegiance to his son. The late Mr. Jones was a small man with a strong temper, a large appetite, and a taste for drawing-room theatricals. So Mrs. Jones had called her son Macready; "for," she said, "his poor papa would have made a fortune on the stage, and I wish to commemorate his talents. Besides, Macready sounds better with Jones than a commoner Christian name would do."

But his cousins called him MacGreedy.

"The apples of the enchanted garden were guarded by dragons. Many knights went after them. One wished for the apples, but he did not like to fight the dragons."

It was the tutor who spoke from the dark corner by the fireplace. His eyes shone like a cat's, and MacGreedy felt like a half-scared mouse, and made up his mind to cry. He put his right fist into one eye, and had just taken it out, and was about to put his left fist into the other, when he saw that the tutor was no longer looking at him. So he made up his mind to go on with the raisins, for one can have a peevish cry at any time, but plums are not scattered broadcast every day. Several times he had tried to pocket them, but just at the moment the tutor was sure to look at him, and in his fright he dropped the raisins, and never could find them again. So this time he resolved to eat them then and there. He had just put one into his mouth when the tutor leaned forward, and his eyes, glowing in the firelight, met MacGreedy's, who had not even the presence of mind to shut his mouth, but remained spellbound with a raisin in his cheek.

Flicker, flack! The schoolboys stirred up snapdragon again, and with the blue light upon his features the tutor made so horrible a grimace that MacGreedy swallowed the raisin with a start. He had bolted it whole, and it might have been a bread pill for any enjoyment he had of the flavour. But the tutor laughed aloud. He certainly was an alarming object, pulling those grimaces in the blue brandy glare; and unpleasantly like a picture of Bogy himself with horns and a tail, in a juvenile volume upstairs. True, there were no horns to speak of among the tutor's grizzled curls, and his coat seemed to fit as well as most people's on his long back, so that unless he put his tail in his

pocket, it is difficult to see how he could have had one. But then (as Miss Letitia said), "With dress one can do anything and hide anything." And on dress Miss Letitia's opinion was final.

Miss Letitia was a cousin. She was dark, high-coloured, glossy-haired, stout, and showy. She was as neat as a new pin, and had a will of her own. Her hair was firmly fixed by bandoline, her garibaldis by an arrangement which failed when applied to those of the widow, and her opinions by the simple process of looking at everything from one point of view. Her forte was dress and general ornamentation; not that Miss Letitia was extravagant—far from it. If one may use the expression, she utilized for ornament a hundred bits and scraps that most people would have wasted. But, like other artists, she saw everything through the medium of her own art. She looked at birds with an eye to hats, and at flowers with reference to evening parties. At picture exhibitions and concerts she carried away jacket patterns and bonnets in her head, as other people make mental notes of an ærial effect, or a bit of fine instrumentation. An enthusiastic horticulturist once sent Miss Letitia a cut specimen of a new flower. It was a lovely spray from a lately-imported shrub. A botanist would have pressed it—an artist must have taken its portrait—a poet might have written a sonnet in praise of its beauty. Miss Letitia twisted a piece of wire round the stem, and fastened it on to her black-lace bonnet. It came on the day of a review, when Miss Letitia had to appear in a carriage, and it was quite a success. As she said to the widow, "It was so natural that no one could doubt its being Parisian."

"What a strange fellow that tutor is!" said the visitor. He spoke to the daughter of the house, a girl with a face like a summer's day, and hair like a ripe corn-field rippling in the sun. He was a fine young man, and had a youth's taste for the sports and amusements of his age. But lately he had changed. He seemed to himself to be living in a higher, nobler atmosphere than hitherto. He had discovered that he was poetical—he might prove to be a genius. He certainly was eloquent, he could talk for hours, and did so—to the young lady with the sunshiny face. They spoke on the highest subjects, and what a listener she was! So intelligent and appreciative, and with such an exquisite *pose* of the head—it must inspire a block of wood merely to see such a creature in a listening attitude. As to our young friend, he poured forth volumes; he was really clever, and

for her he became eloquent. To-night he spoke of Christmas, of time-honoured custom and old association; and what he said would have made a Christmas article for a magazine of the first class. He poured scorn on the cold nature that could not, and the affectation that would not, appreciate the domestic festivities of this sacred season. What, he asked, could be more delightful, more perfect, than such a gathering as this, of the family circle round the Christmas hearth? He spoke with feeling, and it may be said with disinterested feeling, for he had not joined his family circle himself this Christmas, and there was a vacant place by the hearth of his own home.

"He is strange," said the young lady (she spoke of the tutor in answer to the above remark); "but I am very fond of him. He has been with us so long he is like one of the family; though we know as little of his history as we did on the day he came."

"He looks clever," said the visitor. (Perhaps that is the least one can say for a fellow-creature who shows a good deal of bare skull, and is not otherwise good-looking.)

"He is clever," she answered, "wonderfully clever; so clever and so odd that sometimes I fancy he is hardly 'canny.' There is something almost supernatural about his acuteness and his ingenuity, but they are so kindly used; I wonder he has not brought out any playthings for us to-night."

"Playthings?" inquired the young man.

"Yes; on birthdays or festivals like this he generally brings something out of those huge pockets of his. He has been all over the world, and he produces Indian puzzles, Japanese flower-buds that bloom in hot water, and German toys with complicated machinery, which I suspect him of manufacturing himself. I call him Godpapa Drosselmayer, after that delightful old fellow in Hoffman's tale of the Nut Cracker."

"What's that about crackers?" inquired the tutor, sharply, his eyes changing colour like a fire opal.

"I am talking of *Nussknacker* and *Mauskönig*," laughed the young lady. "Crackers do not belong to Christmas; fireworks come on the 5th of November."

"Tut, tut!" said the tutor; "I always tell your ladyship that you are still a tom-boy at heart, as when I first came, and you climbed trees and pelted myself and my young students with horse-chestnuts. You

think of crackers to explode at the heels of timorous old gentlemen in a November fog; but I mean bonbon crackers, coloured crackers, dainty crackers—crackers for young people with mottoes of sentiment”—(here the tutor shrugged his high shoulders an inch or two higher, and turned the palms of his hands outwards with a glance indescribably comical)—“crackers with paper prodigies, crackers with sweetmeats—*such* sweetmeats!” He smacked his lips with a grotesque contortion, and looked at Master MacGreedy, who choked himself with his last raisin and forthwith burst into tears.

The widow tried in vain to soothe him with caresses, he only stamped and howled the more. But Miss Letitia gave him some smart smacks on the shoulders to cure his choking fit, and as she kept up the treatment with vigour the young gentleman was obliged to stop and assure her that the raisin had “gone the right way” at last. “If he were my child,” Miss Letitia had been known to observe, with that confidence which characterises the theories of those who are not parents, “I would &c. &c. &c.,” in fact, Miss Letitia thought she would have made a very different boy of him—as, indeed, I believe she would.

“Are crackers all that you have for us, sir?” asked one of the two schoolboys, as they hung over the tutor’s chair. They were twins, grand boys, with broad, good-humoured faces, and curly wigs, as like as two puppy dogs of the same breed. They were only known apart by their intimate friends, and were always together, romping, laughing, snarling, squabbling, huffing, and helping each other against the world. Each of them owned a wiry terrier, and in their relations to each other the two dogs (who were marvellously alike) closely followed the example of their masters.

“Do you not care for crackers, Jim?” asked the tutor.

“Not much, sir. They do for girls; but, as you know, I care for nothing but military matters. Do you remember that beautiful toy of yours—‘The Besieged City’? Ah! I liked that. Look out, Tom! you’re shoving my arm. Can’t you stand straight, man?”

“R-r-r-r—r-r, snap!”

Tom’s dog was resenting contact with Jim’s dog on the hearthrug. There was a hustle among the four, and then they subsided.

“The Besieged City was all very well for you, Jim,” said Tom, who meant to be a sailor; “but please to remember that it admitted of no

attack from the sea; and what was there for me to do? Ah, sir! you are so clever, I often think you could help me to make a swing with ladders instead of single ropes, so that I could run up and down the rigging whilst it was in full go."

"That would be something like your fir-tree prank, Tom," said his sister. "Can you believe," she added, turning to the visitor, "that Tom lopped the branches of a tall young fir-tree all the way up, leaving little bits for foothold, and then climbed up it one day in an awful storm of wind, and clung on at the top, rocking backwards and forwards? and when papa sent word for him to come down, he said parental authority was superseded at sea by the rules of the service. It was a dreadful storm, and the tree snapped very soon after he got safe to the ground."

"Storm!" sneered Tom, "a capful of wind. Well, it did blow half a gale at the last. But oh! it was glorious!"

"Let us see what we can make of the crackers," said the tutor—and he pulled some out of his pocket. They were put in a dish upon the table, for the company to choose from; and the terriers jumped and snapped, and tumbled over each other, for they thought that the plate contained eatables. Animated by the same idea, but with quieter steps, Master MacGreedy also approached the table.

"The dogs are noisy," said the tutor, "too noisy. We must have quiet—peace and quiet." His lean hand was once more in his pocket, and he pulled out a box, from which he took some powder, which he scattered on the burning log. A slight smoke now rose from the hot embers, and floated into the room. Was the powder one of those strange compounds that act upon the brain? Was it a magician's powder? Who knows? With it came a sweet, subtle fragrance. It was strange—every one fancied he had smelt it before, and all were absorbed in wondering what it was, and where they had met with it. Even the dogs sat on their haunches with their noses up, sniffing in a speculative manner.

"It's not lavender," said the grandmother, slowly, "and it's not rosemary. There is a something of tansy in it (and a very fine tonic flavour too, my dears, though it's *not* in fashion now). Depend upon it, it's a potpourri, and from an excellent receipt, sir"—and the old lady bowed courteously towards the tutor. "My mother made the best potpourri in the country, and it was very much like this. Not quite, perhaps, but much the same, much the same."

The grandmother was a fine old gentlewoman "of the old school," as the phrase is. She was very stately and gracious in her manners, daintily neat in her person, and much attached to the old parson of the parish, who now sat near her chair. All her life she had been very proud of her fine stock of fair linen, both household and personal; and for many years past had kept her own graveclothes ready in a drawer. They were bleached as white as snow, and lay amongst bags of dried lavender and potpourri. Many times had it seemed likely that they would be needed, for the old lady had had severe illnesses of late, when the good parson sat by her bedside, and read to her of the coming of the Bridegroom, and of that "fine linen clean and white," which is "the righteousness of the saints." It was of that drawer, with its lavender and potpourri bags, that the scented smoke had reminded her.

"It has rather an overpowering odour," said the old parson; "it is suggestive of incense. I am sure I once smelt something like it in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. It is very delicious."

The parson's long residence in his parish had been marked by one great holiday. With the savings of many years he had performed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and it was rather a joke against him that he illustrated a large variety of subjects by reference to his favourite topic, the holiday of his life.

"It smells of gunpowder," said Jim, decidedly, "and something else. I can't tell what."

"Something one smells in a seaport town," said Tom.

"Can't be very delicious then," Jim retorted.

"It's not *quite* the same," piped the widow; "but it reminds me very much of an old bottle of attar of roses that was given me when I was at school, with a copy of verses, by a young gentleman who was brother to one of the pupils. I remember Mr. Jones was quite annoyed when he found it in an old box, where I am sure I had not touched it for ten years or more; and I never spoke to him but once, on Examination Day (the young gentleman, I mean). And it's like—yes it's certainly like a hairwash Mr. Jones used to use. I've forgotten what it was called, but I know it cost fifteen shillings a bottle; and Macready threw one over a few weeks before his dear papa's death, and annoyed him extremely."

Whilst the company was thus engaged, Master MacGreedy took advantage of the general abstraction to secure half a dozen crackers

to his own share ; he retired to a corner with them, where he meant to pick them quietly to pieces by himself. He wanted the gay paper, and the motto, and the sweetmeats ; but he did not like the report of the cracker. And then what he did want, he wanted all to himself.

"Give us a cracker," said Master Jim, dreamily.

The dogs, after a few dissatisfied snorts, had dropped from their sitting posture, and were lying close together on the rug, dreaming, and uttering short commenting barks and whines at intervals. The twins were now reposing lazily at the tutor's feet, and did not feel disposed to exert themselves even so far as to fetch their own bonbons.

"There's one," said the tutor, taking a fresh cracker from his pocket. One end of it was of red and gold paper, the other of transparent green stuff with silver lines. The boys pulled it.

* * * * *

The report was louder than Jim had expected.

"The firing has begun," he murmured, involuntarily ; "steady steady !" these last words were to his horse, who seemed to be moving under him, not from fear, but from impatience. What had been the red and gold paper of the cracker was now the scarlet and gold lace of his own cavalry uniform. He knocked a speck from his sleeve, and scanned the distant ridge, from which a thin line of smoke floated solemnly away, with keen, impatient eyes. Were they to stand inactive all the day ?

Presently the horse erects his head. His eyes sparkle—he pricks his sensitive ears—his nostrils quiver with a strange delight. It is the trumpet ! Fan farrâ ! Fan farrâ ! The brazen voice speaks—the horses move—the plumes wave—the helmets shine. On a summer's day they ride slowly, gracefully, calmly down a slope, to death or glory. Fan farrâ ! Fan farrâ ! Fan farrâ !

* * * * *

Of all this Master Tom knew nothing. The report of the cracker seemed to him only an echo in his brain of a sound that had been in his ears for thirty-six weary hours. The noise of a heavy sea beating against the ship's side in a gale. It was over now, and he was keeping the midnight watch on deck, gazing upon the liquid green of the waves, which, still heaving and seething after a storm, were lit with phosphoric light, and, as the ship held steadily on her course, poured past at the rate of twelve knots an hour in a silvery stream. Faster than any

ship can sail his thoughts travelled home; and as old times came back to him, he hardly knew whether what he looked at was the phosphor-lighted sea, or green gelatine paper barred with silver. And did the tutor speak? Or was it the voice of some sea monster sounding in his ears?

"The spirits of the storm have gone below to make their report. The treasure gained from sunk vessels has been reckoned, and the sea is illuminated in honour of the spoil."

* * * * *

The visitor now took a cracker and held it to the young lady. Her end was of white paper with a raised pattern; his of dark-blue gelatine with gold stars. It snapped, the bonbon dropped between them, and the young man got the motto. It was a very bald one—

"My heart is thine.
Wilt thou be mine?"

He was ashamed to show it to her. What could be more meagre? One could write a hundred better couplets "standing on one leg," as the saying is. He was trying to improvise just one for the occasion, when he became aware that the blue sky over his head was dark with the shades of night and lighted with stars. A brook rippled near with a soothing monotony. The evening wind sighed through the trees, and wafted the fragrance of the sweet bay-leaved willow towards him, and blew a stray lock of hair against his face. Yes! *She* also was there, walking beside him, under the scented willow bushes. Where, why, and whither he did not ask to know. She was with him—with him; and he seemed to tread on the summer air. He had no doubt as to the nature of his own feelings for her, and here was such an opportunity for declaring them as might never occur again. Surely now, if ever, he would be eloquent! Thoughts of poetry clothed in words of fire must spring unbidden to his lips at such a moment. And yet somehow he could not find a single word to say. He beat his brains, but not an idea would come forth. Only that idiotic cracker motto which haunted him with its meagre couplet

"My heart is thine.
Wilt thou be mine?"

Meanwhile they wandered on. The precious time was passing. He must at least make a beginning.

“What a fine night it is!” he observed. But, oh dear! That was a thousand times balder and more meagre than the cracker motto; and not another word could he find to say. At this moment the awkward silence was broken by a voice from a neighbouring copse. It was a nightingale singing to his mate. There was no lack of eloquence, and of melodious eloquence, there. The song was plaintive as old memories, and as full of tenderness as the eyes of the young girl were full of tears. They were standing still now, and with her graceful head bent she was listening to the bird. He stooped his head near hers, and spoke with a simple natural outburst almost involuntary.

"Do you ever think of old times? Do you remember the old house, and the fun we used to have? and the tutor whom you pelted with horse-chestnuts when you were a little girl? And those cracker bonbons, and the motto *we* drew—

“ ‘My heart is thine.
Wilt thou be mine?’ ”

She smiled, and lifted her eyes ("blue as the sky, and bright as the stars," he thought) to his, and answered "Yes."

Then the bonbon motto was avenged, and there was silence. Eloquent, perfect, complete, beautiful silence! Only the wind sighed through the fragrant willows, the stream rippled, the stars shone, and in the neighbouring copse the nightingale sang, and sang, and sang.

When the white end of the cracker came into the young lady's hand, she was full of admiration for the fine raised pattern. As she held it between her fingers it suddenly struck her that she had discovered what the tutor's fragrant smoke smelt like. It was like the scent of orange flowers, and had certainly a soporific effect upon the senses. She felt very sleepy, and as she stroked the shiny surface of the cracker she found herself thinking it was very soft for paper, and then rousing herself with a start, and wondering at her own folly in speaking thus of the white silk in which she was dressed, and of which she was holding up the skirt between her finger and thumb, as if she were dancing a minuet.

"It's grandmamma's egg-shell brocade!" she cried. "Oh, grandmamma! Have you given it to me? That lovely old thing! But I thought it was the family wedding dress, and that I was not to have it till I was a bride."

"And so you are, my dear. And a fairer bride the sun never shone on," sobbed the old lady, who was kissing and blessing her, and wishing her, in the words of the old formula—

"Health to wear it,
Strength to tear it,
And money to buy another."

"There is no hope for the last two things, you know," said the young girl; "for I am sure that the flag that braved a thousand years was not half so strong as your brocade; and as to buying another there are none to be bought in these degenerate days."

The old lady's reply was probably very gracious, for she liked to be complimented on the virtues of old things in general, and of her egg-shell brocade in particular. But of what she said her granddaughter heard nothing. With the strange irregularity of dreams, she found herself, she knew not how, in the old church. It was true. She was a bride, standing there with old friends and old associations thick around her, on the threshold of a new life. The sun shone through the stained glass of the windows, and illuminated the brocade, whose old-fashioned stiffness so became her childish beauty, and flung a thousand new tints over her sunny hair, and drew so powerful a fragrance from the orange blossom with which it was twined, that it was almost overpowering. Yes! It was too sweet—too strong. She certainly would not be able to bear it much longer without losing her senses. And the service was going on. A question had been asked of her, and she must reply. She made a strong effort, and said "Yes," simply and very earnestly, for it was what she meant. But she had no sooner said it than she became uneasily conscious that she had not used the right words. Some one laughed. It was the tutor, and his voice jarred and disturbed the dream, as a stone troubles the surface of still water. The vision trembled, and then broke, and the young lady found herself still sitting by the table and fingering the cracker paper, whilst the tutor chuckled and rubbed his hands by the fire, and his shadow scrambled on the wall like an ape upon a tree. But her "Yes" had passed into the young man's dream without disturbing it, and he dreamt on.

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(To be continued.)